

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 PM-03 H-01

L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

IO-10 /091 W

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R 161215Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7274

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0106

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: EAIR, TD, XL

SUBJ: PM WILLIAMS AND LIAT

REF: BTN 1928 AND PREVIOUS

1. IN AN HOUR-LONG MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS JANUARY 13 (LARGELY DEVOTED TO HIS TRIP TO THE FAR EAST AND THE U.S. ON WHICH HE DEPARTED JANUARY 15), THE PM TOUCHED BRIEFLY UPON PROFFERED VENEZUELAN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO LIAT. HE SCATHINGLY NOTED THAT THE VENEZUELANS HAD ASKED 14 PERCENT INTEREST AND INSISTED ON PLACING A VENEZUELAN ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, WITH VETO POWER OVER FINANCIAL DECISIONS. WILLIAMS IMPLIED THAT BWIA HAD SOLD LIAT BECAUSE THE GOTT COULD SEE NO WAY TO MAKE LIAT PROFITABLE OR EVEN BRING IT TO THE BREAK-EVEN POINT. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD TURNED DOWN PLEAS FROM SOME HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE LESSER DEVELOPED CARIBBEAN ISLANDS THAT BWIA OR TTAS (THE GOTT-OWNED TRINIDAD-TO-TOBAGO CARRIER) PROVIDE SERVICE TO THE SMALLER ISLANDS, NOTING THAT NEITHER
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AIRCRAFT NOR RUNWAYS ARE FULLY SUITABLE. HE ALSO TOLD THEM THAT THE GOTT CERTAINLY COULD NOT SUBSIDIZE SERVICE TO OTHER ISLANDS,

POINTING OUT THAT THE TOBAGO SERVICE WAS SUBSIDIZED IN TRINIDAD'S NATIONAL INTEREST BECAUSE IT IS A DOMESTIC FLIGHT. THE PM TOLD ME HE WAS FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT THERE IS NO WAY THAT A REORGANIZED LIAT CAN BECOME FINANCIALLY VIABLE, AND SAID THAT THE GOTT WOULD NEVER PUT MONEY INTO SUCH A LOSING PROPOSITION.

2. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PM SPOKE HIGHLY OF PRESIDENT PEREZ, HE POINTEDLY IGNORED RECENT PRESS REPORTS THAT HE SOON WOULD MEET WITH THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT, AND SUBSEQUENTLY GAVE A PRESS INTERVIEW DISCLAIMING ANY KNOWLEDGE OF A PROPOSED CARIBBEAN SUMMIT.(SEPTEL.)

MILLER

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